

Service Area Strategic Plan

Department of Social Services (765)

Service Area 24 of 33

Adoption Subsidies and Supportive Services (765 469 03)

Description

This service area helps children in foster care who have been permanently and legally separated from their birth parents become permanent members of a new family. Services are provided to strengthen adoptive families after legal adoption to prevent adoption dissolutions. Families are helped to complete non-agency placement adoptions including parental placement adoptions, step-parent adoptions, inter-country adoptions, adult adoptions, and children adopted through private, child-placing agencies. The adoption program maintains closed adoption records and releases information from closed adoption records, as allowed by state laws, and assists the courts to make informed decisions in custody dispute cases involving minor children.

Background Information

Mission Alignment and Authority

- *Describe how this service supports the agency mission*

By assisting children and families with the adoption process and courts to make informed decisions regarding custody of children, we are helping shape strong futures for children and contributing to building stronger families and communities.

- *Describe the Statutory Authority of this Service*

Title IV-E, of the Social Security Act: provides federal financial participation in adoption assistance, requires states to recruit prospective adoptive families that reflect the population of children in foster care waiting for adoption, and prohibits states from delaying or denying adoptive placements based on the geographical location of the child and prospective adoptive parent;

Title IV-B, of the Social Security Act: provides funding for Safe and Stable Families, 20% of which is to be dedicated to adoption services, and funding for child welfare services;

Chapter 11 Article 9, of the Code of Virginia: governs juvenile court proceedings;

Chapter 12, of the Code of Virginia: provides legal procedures for completion of an adoption in the circuit court, requires the Commissioner to maintain closed adoption records and to release information from closed adoption records;

Chapter 13, of the Code of Virginia: governs adoption assistance for children with special needs;

Chapter 9, of the Code of Virginia: governs entrustment agreements for purpose of adoption;

Chapter 6.1, of the Code of Virginia: governs custody and visitation arrangements for minor children;

22VAC40-260-20. Subsidy. Adoption Assistance shall be executed by the agency or child placing agency for all children who have been determined eligible for subsidy.

22VAC40-240-20: Responsibilities of the agency in juvenile court proceeding for parental placement adoptions: includes conducting home studies, providing reports to court, and reporting illegal activities to the Commissioner.

22VAC40-250-20. The Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia: the purpose of the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia is to increase opportunities for children to be adopted by providing services to agencies having custody of these children.

Customers

Agency Customer Group	Customer	Customers served annually	Potential annual customers
Individuals, Children and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Children and Families (potential unlimited)	1,247	0
Community and Volunteer Organizations (potential unlimited)	Faith-based Organizations (potential unlimited)	330	0
Governmental Entities (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Federal Agencies	1	1
General Public (served unknown; potential unlimited)	General Public (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Governmental Entities (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Local Departments of Social Services	120	120
Individuals, Children and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Low-income Individuals and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Individuals, Children and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Non-custodial Parents (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Businesses (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Non-profits (potential unlimited)	35	0
Governmental Entities (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Policy Makers (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Governmental Entities (served unknown; potential unlimited)	State and Local Government agencies (served all localities; potential unlimited)	0	0

Anticipated Changes To Agency Customer Base

The number of children available for adoption will continue to increase as a result of the implementation of enhanced federal regulations. Children may need increased services provided through the subsidized assistance program. In FY 2005, the Department of Social Services recognized a 34% increase in subsidy payments to adoptive parents of eligible children. As children get older, their need for continued services will increase.

Partners

Partner	Description
American Public Human Services Administration (APHSA)	
Child Welfare League of America	
Comprehensive Services Organizations (CSA)	
Federal Government	
Local Departments of Social Services	
National resource centers	
Print and broadcast media	
Private Child Placing Agencies	
Regional and national adoption resource exchanges	
State Agencies	
Virginia Department of Education	
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice	
Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)	
Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA)	
Volunteer Organizations	

Products and Services

- *Factors Impacting the Products and/or Services:*

Federal laws and regulations require states to increase, in a timely manner, the number of children in foster care achieving the goal of adoption. Financial penalties will be imposed if states are not in substantial compliance with the requirements of the federal Child and Family Services Review. As a part of the Child and Family Services Reviews, the federal government has established a national standard that 32% of the children exiting foster care through adoption will have achieved adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care. At the end of SFY 2007, Virginia's compliance rate was 31.34%. Another federal requirement mandates the state to terminate parental rights on children who have been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months. Many local departments of social services do not have workers dedicated to adoption, which may negatively impact Virginia's ability to meet this requirement.

The majority of children in foster care with the goal of adoption are children with special needs who will require state and federal adoption assistance. As the number of children achieving adoption increases, expenditures for adoption assistance are also likely to increase.

The state match rate to draw down federal funding for recruitment of prospective adoptive families has increased from 25% to 51%. As a result, fewer local departments of social services apply for federal funding for recruitment activities for prospective adoptive families. Without sufficient recruitment activities, children with the goal of adoption will remain in foster care for longer periods of time and some may never be adopted.

There are no minimum training requirements for social workers providing adoption services, or for prospective adoptive parents. Attempts by the Department to pass regulations establishing minimum training standards have met resistance due to the lack of financial and staffing resources that will be needed to implement mandated training.

- *Anticipated Changes to the Products and/or Services*

To gain improved understanding of the adoption assistance program and steady increase in financial payments in SFY 2005 and 2006, the Virginia General Assembly requested that the Department of Social Services conduct a study of the program. The report, completed by stakeholders and staff, recommends that VDSS pursue program improvement by:

1. Creating a uniform adoption assistance agreement that encourages linkage between the child's needs and service payment level,
2. Increasing the use of federal Title IV-E funding for adoption assistance payments and establishing clear and consistent policies and procedures between program and finance,
3. Ensuring the accuracy of data in the child welfare information system, and
4. Implementing clear adoption assistance practice guidelines

The General Assembly will take action on these recommendations during its 2008 legislative session.

The Virginia Putative Father Registry was developed and implemented on July 1, 2007. This confidential data base allows putative fathers to register to protect their right to receive notice in adoption and termination of parental rights proceedings.

- *Listing of Products and/or Services*

- Services to promote family stability
- Financial support for children
- Services that promote sufficiency
- Services to protect children
- Services to ensure that children have permanent homes
- Photo-listing books of children waiting for adoption

- Photo-listing books of approved adoptive families
- Display boards for recruitment
- Brochures and pamphlets on adoption
- Update recruitment brochures
- Contracts with private child placing agencies and community organizations to provide a full array of adoption services.
- Annual newsletter on adoption
- Handbook for attorneys on Virginia's adoption laws
- Support Services (e.g., HR, IS)
- Putative Father Registry

Finance

- *Financial Overview*

Funding for the Adoptions program comes from general funds and federal funds. The federal funds come from various child welfare grants including Title IV-E Adoption Assistance, Title IV-B Part I (Child Welfare Services), Title IV-B Part II (Promoting Safe and Stable Families), Adoption Opportunities, and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG).

- *Financial Breakdown*

	Fiscal Year 2009		Fiscal Year 2010	
	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund
Base Budget	\$50,101,839	\$18,511,398	\$50,101,839	\$18,511,398
Change To Base	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Service Area Total	\$50,101,839	\$18,511,398	\$50,101,839	\$18,511,398

Service Area Objectives

- We will achieve a safe, permanent family for children in foster care who have the goal of adoption.

Alignment to Agency Goals

- Agency Goal: Maximize the economic independence, safety and stability of individuals and families

Objective Measures

- Children will be adopted within 24 months of entering foster care.

Governor's Key:

Yes

Measure Type:

Outcome

Measure Frequency:

Quarterly

Key Summary: We will increase the percent of children adopted within 24 months of entering foster care to 32% by June 30, 2010.

Frequency Comment: % of children adopted within 24 months of entering FC

Measure Baseline: 21% of children were adopted within 24 months of entering foster care in SFY 2005.

Measure Target: 32% of children will be adopted within 24 months of entering foster care by the end of SFY 2010.

Data Source and Calculation: Data will be derived from the On-line Automated Services Information System (OASIS). This measure is determined annually by the number of children who exit foster care with an exit reason of adoption.